**Beyond the realms of confusion and despair**

**Three reflections on Jewish education post-October 7**

**Daniel Fainstein**

**1-Even if confused, as educational leaders we don't have the right to be silent**

We find ourselves in a state of vertigo and confusion, grappling to comprehend the events of October 7 and their profound significance. The perspective and distance necessary to determine whether this marks a new epoch in Jewish history or the history of the state of Israel elude us. Uncertainty prevails as we contemplate whether this is a singular event or part of a continuum of wars and conflicts that have unfolded since the establishment of the State of Israel. Amidst tears and pain, we confront the aftermath of a cunning and cruel attack that has once again placed our vulnerability at the forefront of our collective consciousness.

In the very State conceived to eradicate Jewish vulnerability, we now grapple with a poignant paradox—vulnerability persists. This extends beyond Israel, touching numerous diaspora communities amidst a troubling surge in hate speech and anti-Semitism. An existential sense of fragility, abandonment, and loneliness pervades our collective consciousness.

Simultaneously, a profound and potent kinship emerges—a sense of Klal Israel, embodying the "covenant of destiny" binding Israel with the diaspora. Are we bewildered because we nurtured an illusory worldview, a simplistic optimism shattered by the weight of history? How were we blinded to the multiple latent disruptive processes quietly germinating over time? These questions linger, challenging us to reevaluate our perspectives and confront the complex realities shaping our world.

Indeed, this painful situation serves as a wake-up call, jolting us from the realm of wishful thinking.

The current challenges underscore not only the failure of leadership and those in positions of authority at various levels but also highlight extraordinary manifestations of leadership emerging from the grassroots of society and communities. This dichotomy prompts a reevaluation of our expectations and calls for a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the evolving landscape of global affairs.

Principio del formulario

Principio del formulario

We are perplexed trying to piece together the puzzle of our world.

We must first construct our own narrative of what happened and what it means for our lives before we can propose narratives for our colleagues and students.

This narrative evolves through a dialogue woven from our individual experiences, perceptions, and insights, interwoven with conversations among colleagues and friends. Personally, embarking on a mission to Israel with an exceptional group of colleagues from diverse countries played a pivotal role in shaping and articulating my narrative.

**As educational leaders we do not have the right to remain indifferent or paralyzed.** There is great expectation in our educational communities.

Our legitimacy as leaders will be tested in this hour according to our responses.

We must articulate a vision that, although provisional and fragmented, allows us to guide and orient our communities and institutions in these uncertain and turbulent times.

2**-We must develop a “long-term” perspective to better understand the present, without falling into despair or false optimism.**

Cultivating a "long-term" perspective is essential for a more nuanced and profound understanding of the present. This approach enables us to transcend the immediate challenges and fluctuations, offering a broader context within which to interpret and evaluate current events. By adopting a historical lens that spans centuries and millennia, we gain insight into the enduring patterns, complexities, and resilience inherent in the Jewish experience.

This long-term perspective serves as a counterbalance to the extremes of despair and false optimism. It encourages a realistic and measured assessment of the current situation, recognizing that history unfolds through a series of ebbs and flows, setbacks and advancements. Through this lens, we can better navigate the challenges of the present with a sense of perspective and a deeper appreciation for the enduring spirit of the Jewish people.

**Principio del formulario**

**3-** **Educating for resilience and dignity.**

Thirty years the philosopher of education Israel Scheffler defined the goals of Jewish education from the perspective of the student:

“To initiate the Jewish child into the culture, history, and spiritual heritage of the Jewish people**; to assist the child in understanding and confronting the truth about Jewish history, identity, and existence to enhance their dignity as a Jew**; and to enable them to accept and be creative within the Jewish dimension of their life”.

I believe that these objectives carry a greater urgency today than ever before and should permeate every aspect of our educational institutions' curriculum.

Confronting the truth about Jewish existence involves addressing historical challenges, including periods of persecution, discrimination, and diaspora. It also encompasses understanding the contemporary issues facing the Jewish community, such as anti-Semitism and geopolitical tensions. This knowledge equips the child to navigate the complexities of the world while maintaining a strong and dignified sense of self.

Amidst confusion and pain, a clear path eludes us, yet we trust that, as educators, each of us holds a pivotal role in navigating this challenging moment. While the way forward may be uncertain, we place our confidence in the significance of making substantial contributions during these trying times.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the empowering message ": "Be strong and resolute, be not in fear or in dread of them; for the Lord your God Himself marches with you: He will not fail you or forsake you." (31:6) Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

This timeless encouragement from Moses to Joshua imparts resilience and fortitude. It transcends temporal boundaries, inspiring strength in facing challenges. The profound assurance that God's presence is unwavering reinforces the call to steadfastness. This enduring message, encapsulated in these words, serves as a timeless beacon of courage, echoing through generations.